

Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight Trilogy Is Ready for Another Chapter

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Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight trilogy brought Bruce Wayne's story to a close, but that story needs another installment to complete his arc.



Since superhero movies took cinema by storm, audiences have been treated to multiple live-action iterations of Batman, each one grittier than the last. However, few have had a real chance to develop in their respective franchises. The Caped Crusader that came closest to a complete arc was Christian Bale in Christopher Nolan's iconic *Dark Knight* trilogy.

It's been more than a decade since Nolan's trilogy came to a close. Over seven years, the renowned filmmaker explored the major facets of Bruce Wayne and the persona he wore as Gotham City's defender. As widely praised as it was, and as conclusive as it seemed to be, the trilogy remains unfinished in some ways and needs another installment. As recent blockbusters have shown, it's never too late for a sequel. On top of that, Bale has expressed interest in reprising Batman, but only if Nolan were involved.

The Dark Knight Rises Left Unanswered Questions



Each installment in the trilogy explored a different facet of Batman and allowed Bruce to conquer his weaknesses. Scarecrow and Ra's al Ghul taught Bruce to embrace his fears and strengthen his resolve in *Batman Begins*, allowing him to transform from a tragic but spoiled member of Gotham's elite to a committed defender of the average citizen. The Joker and Gotham's underworld taught him what he needed to become before Bane taught him how to become it.

Batman transformed from a vigilante into an idea and a symbol of hope for the city, culminating in his heroic demise -- as far as the general public knew -- and his retirement, passing his legacy on to one of his noblest allies: John Blake, who uncovered the Batcave and presumably all of Bruce's equipment. *The Dark Knight Rises* left off hinting that Blake would either take on the mantle of Batman or the comic book superhero that partially inspired his character, Robin. As fun as it was as an ending, it was a terrible place to leave Batman's story because it was so close to bringing Bruce Wayne's transformation home.

Alongside everything Batman learned from each supervillain's defeat and incarceration was a growing sense of trust with certain people around him. His circle grew from Lucius Fox and Alfred to Commissioner Gordon, Catwoman and, eventually, John Blake. That particular line of growth never culminated in anything more than Blake's discovery of the Batcave. Before Bruce could divulge any of the lessons he had learned from his time as a vigilante, the trilogy came to an end, and the billionaire vigilante seemingly got his happily ever after.

Nolan's *Dark Knight* saga needs one more installment to explore whether or not Wayne really learned anything from his battles and whether he is able to pass on the mantle of Batman. Is Batman really a symbol for Gotham, or is it something that lives and dies with Bruce Wayne? After all, *The Dark Knight Rises* saw Bruce act without his wealth, without his gear and without his allies. He was sent to The Pit and rose up anyway. So clearly, Bruce Wayne, his skill set and his ability to endure are a large part of the Batman persona.

In the comics, Batman is surrounded by an entire list of apprentices, all of which Bruce took part in raising for a time. There was Dick Grayson, who eventually became Nightwing; Jason Todd, who went on to become the Red Hood; and Tim Drake. They all became Robin at one point or another. That's not even mentioning Barbara Gordon, who became Batgirl and still very much had a living father in her life. There is an entire discussion to be had about how ethical it was that he took these children under his wing and whether or not Bruce Wayne was acting in the best interest of those children. That alone would be a topic worth exploring in a film. But in the context of Bruce Wayne's personal arc in the *Dark Knight* films, a film exploring his relationship with an apprentice would offer Nolan a chance to examine Wayne's ability to become a mentor akin to those who aided him and his ability to come to terms with the lack of proper parental figures in his life.

Did Becoming Batman Help Bruce Wayne Cope With His Trauma?



That's what this has been about. Bruce Wayne adopted the Bat persona as a means of coping with his parents' murder, avenging them by dealing with crime and the threat of evil. As grounded and detailed as Nolan's trilogy was in their study of Wayne as a character, his childhood trauma and his ability to deal with it was never really brought to light -- nothing deeper than his embrace of fear in *Batman Begins*, anyway.

Of course, the versions of Batman that have hit the big screen can't be ignored. Each one has been grittier and more violent than the last, but none of them placed Batman in the place appropriate for the kind of in-depth exploration audiences saw in Nolan's trilogy. Ben Affleck's Batman was made for the action-packed, overflowing world of the DCEU, while Robert Pattinson's version of Batman is nowhere near ready to bring his trauma to an end -- certainly not in the way Bale's iteration of Batman was at the end of the *Dark Knight* trilogy.

While Bale has shown a willingness to reprise the role, there's nothing to suggest audiences can or should expect the franchise to continue. But fans can always light the signal online and hope another *Dark Knight* film arrives in theaters eventually.